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A
S E R M O N

Preach'd at

B A N B U R Y,

December 3. 1702.

Being the Day of

Publick Thanksgiving.

BY

B E N J A M I N L O V E L I N G, M. A.

Vicar of Banbury.

L O N D O N,

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To the Worshipful the *Mayor, Aldermen, and Capital Burgeſſes* of the Borough of *Banbury*.

Gentlemen,

SINCE 'tis at your Request, that this naked Off-spring is sent into the World, I take the freedom to cloath it with your Patronage; tho' after all, I fear, 'twill rather die than live, by reason of its too hasty Birth.

But if it lives in your Esteem, and in the Hearts of my Cure, 'twill, I'm sure, answer the end of its Being; for when 'twas first form'd, I did not expect it would presume to wander out of its own Parish: And still, if it finds no Reception abroad, 'twill be a competent Satisfaction to me, to see it made much of at home.

The Occasion certainly cannot but be highly acceptable to all true English-men; and I am apt to suspect, your being transported therewith, might induce you to over-look those Faults, which less candid Judges may perhaps tax it with.

However I am inclin'd to flatter my self, that as Mercies of a Publick Nature, do justly require

DEDICATION.

more than common Returns, so the following Discourse may, in some measure, inform the ignorant what good use they are to make of the late signal Blessings bestow'd by Providence on this undeserving Nation.

I shall not here present you with a Scheme of my sincere Regards for you: How pleasing soever such a Subject may be to me, yet since I am persuaded 'twould be offensive to you, the Publication of this imperfect Performance, shall be the only expressed Testimony of the Respects of,

Gentlemen,

Your most obliged,

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humble Servant,

Ben. Loveling.

Judges v. 2.

Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel.

IT has been the Prudence and Piety of all Ages, after signal Deliverances, to pay the just Tribute of Thanks to Providence. Few are so very arrogant as to ascribe their Victories altogether to themselves: Even those who worship false Deities, will fill their Temples with Eulogies after Success, as well as have Recourse in Adversity and Danger, to Acts of Humiliation.

And especially among the People of God, this well-grounded Practice has been customary and frequent. As the Lord of Hosts often interposed for their Preservation from Enemies; so 'tis observable, that when they were influenc'd by the Conduct of pious Rulers, they as often requited the Mercy with proper Acknowledgments.

An Instance of this we have before us. When the Children of *Israel* had by their Iniquities forfeited the Divine Protection, and were enslav'd by the *Canaanites* no less than twenty Years; the Wife of *Lapidoth*, the renowned *Deborah*, enters into a Confederacy with the Son of *Abinoam*, that by their united Endeavours, the *Israelites* might be released from *Jabin's* Tyranny. And when their joint Forces were, to amazement, successful, even to the utter Destruction of their Enemy and Oppressor; the *Female* Deliverer appear'd altogether as eager to join with her Allie, in returning God Thanks, as she had been forward before to excite him to the Engagement.

To

ecclef. 5. 1.

Judg. 5.

To which purpose, that they might not *give the Sacrifice of Fools*, they compos'd a devout Hymn, a Psalm of Thanksgiving, which they unanimously sung in a very solemn manner. And lest the Vanity and Pride of the conquering *Israelites*, should tempt them to attribute the Victory to themselves; or, lest they should detract from the Honour of the Almighty, in bestowing too great a share on the Instruments of their Freedom; we find *Deborah* and *Barak* in the very beginning of their Hymn, persuading the People to give Thanks to *God*, as the main Cause and Author of their Deliverance; *Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel.*

This is a Subject worthy our Contemplation at this juncture. Almost every Circumstance in this signal Advantage of the *Israelites*, and Destruction of their Adversaries, may serve to remind us of the Occasion of this Day: Nor can we be so ungrateful as not to praise the Lord for the avenging of *England*, when our Eyes are fix'd on such a moving Pattern of Gratitude and Devotion.

Who can reflect on the dejected State of the People of *Israel* under the oppressive *Canaanites*, without considering our own former fruitless Endeavours, to break the Measures of the grand Oppressor? Who can view the Female Judge, rousing up *Barak*, and entering into a firm League with him for the Liberty of God's People; and not be mindful of our Sovereign's Resolution, to defend the Injured from the Encroachments of the Ambitious, by calling in to her Assistance the Confederate Princes? We cannot hear of the surprizing Overthrow of *Sisera*, and all his Host, but we must let our Thoughts travel as far as *Spain*, *Italy*, and other fortunate Stages of our late Triumph. And our unanimous Appearance at this time to demonstrate our Joy, in the religious

religious Acts of Divine Worship, exactly corresponds with the Publick Thanksgiving of *Deborah* and her Colleague in the Song before us.

In the Text we have three things observable; (*viz.*) A National Mercy received, *The avenging of Israel*. A religious Acknowledgment of the Mercy, which consists in *Praise*: And the Author thereof, to whom the Acknowledgment ought in Justice to be made; namely, *the Lord*.

I shall therefore proceed in this following Method:

First, I shall insist upon the vast Importance of Publick Mercies.

Secondly, I shall shew the Reasonableness of their being attended with Publick Praise, or a Day of solemn Thanksgiving.

Thirdly, I shall tell you, How exceeding fit and necessary it is, that such Acts of Praise should be offered to the Lord, as the Author of them.

Then I shall apply the whole to our present Circumstances; and so conclude.

First then, That our Souls may be raised to a due Temper of Gratitude and Thankfulness, whenever we are honoured with National Blessings; I have proposed to shew how very considerable Publick Mercies are.

As Publick Judgments are more terrible in their Nature, and more deplorable in their Event, than those that are inflicted only on particular Persons; so may we imagine National Mercies to be infinitely preferable to private

vate Favours. They are much more extensive ; they reach and affect every Member of the Body Politick, and communicate Life and Vigor to them. They do not cherish one part, to the neglect of another, as private Blessings do ; no, they impartially shed a general Influence, have the same effect on Kingdoms as the Sun on the *Horizon*, warm every Inhabitant with Joy and Sprightfulness. Publick Blessings are a Collection of all private Ones ; in comparison of them, these are as inconsiderable, as a Grain of Corn with relation to the Heap.

Where publick Favours are scattered, the happy Nation becomes an Emblem of the Heavenly Mansions. All things are bright and serene within it ; every individual Soul transported with Fruition ; Gladness sparkles in every Countenance, and is increased by the lively and affecting glances of the Company. Tears are dried up, the Springs of Sorrow graciously stopt, and nothing but what is reviving, presented to the Imagination. In a word ; the Mind feeds upon present Conquests, and hugs it self in its escape from past Terrours, as well as shares in the over-flowing Satisfaction of all its Associates.

Many and very considerable are the Mercies that naturally arise from Victory over Enemies. Hence proceeds the *Blessing of Peace*, which is an happy inlet to most other Advantages. War is to Kingdoms, what Law-suits are to particular Societies and Families : The Disputes of Nations being ended in the Camp, as private Differences in Courts of Judicatures. Now, tho' the Contest be only between Man and Man, yet when Matters are brought to an amicable Conclusion, there is a sensible Benefit diffused throughout the whole Neighbourhood. But this is nothing to the wide and far extended Comforts.

Comforts of a Publick Peace, the Parent and Nurse of the most endearing Accommodations. When therefore a sharp Contention between Empires or Kingdoms is, by a glorious Victory, very likely to be decided, it is not to be questioned but such a Conquest is to the Victorious, a Blessing of the last Importance.

Such a publick Mercy is farther considerable, in that it is subservient to *Plenty* and *Grandeur*. It renders the Enemy poor and despicable, whilst they who are favour'd therewith, abound in all the Affluences of indulgent Nature, and are raised above the Miseries of Poverty and Contempt. And sure to be the Envy and Wonder of impotent Nations, to receive the Homage of Respect when Living, and even after Death to have immortal Trophies erected to our Memory, are no mean Privileges.

Besides, Victory will appear considerably beneficial, if it be observ'd, how much it tends to the *Liberty* of Mankind. When Nations are victorious, their Necks are not gall'd with any Foreign Yoke. They give Laws to themselves, such as in their Opinion may best suit with their own Temper and Interests, and may be obeyed without Difficulty or Reluctance. Whereas a conquered People must expect to sink under the pressure of Imperialism and *Despotick* Government. Liberty is as naturally the object of Men's Desires, as Health or Life; and Confinement so very formidable, that many have chosen the Grave before it. If *Bajazet* be put into an Iron Cage, rather than he will endure the Insults of his Adversaries, he will dash out his own Brains against it. Captivity and Thralldom are of all Circumstances the most mortifying. Even the Pestilence was more acceptable to *David*, than the Sword of the Enemy. When 1 Sam. 24. 14. God threatens the transgressing *Israelites*, he seems to

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John 11. 48.

couch all the Calamities of Life under the astonishing Judgment of enslaving them to their Adversaries. And nothing could enrage the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* more, or fill them with greater Consternation, than the thoughts of the *Romans* coming in among 'em, and taking away both their Place and Nation. Victory therefore must needs be a desirable Mercy, when it secures Nations from the much-dreaded state of Slavery and Confinement, by purchasing for 'em, what is as valuable as Life, the Blessing of *Liberty*.

Micah 4. 4.

Another Advantage near of kin to this, is *Property*, which is in a manner unavoidably consequent upon National Success. This we account so dear and sacred, that we will not stick to sacrifice our Ease, our Purse, nay, Life it self, to procure or preserve it. When every Man sits under his Vine, and under his Fig-tree, and none make 'em afraid: When Subjects have the Shield of Law and Justice to cover their Fortunes from the violence of the Oppressor, Industry thrives, Riches increase, and Birth is given to many useful Virtues: Whilst on the other hand the want of a good Security of Mens Properties, dissolves 'em in Idleness, discourages Labour, and making them Wasps to one another, moves 'em to be diligent in nothing but Theft and Rapine.

Now, What can more effectually guard Mens *Properties*, than the Publick *Mercy* of National Success? This is a sure Fence against Foreign Enemies, and without the base Treachery of *Domesticks*, cannot but prevent all notorious Injustice, which renders the Blessing of victorious Encounters, of very great Consequence to such as enjoy it.

But, while we are thus insisting on things of less moment, let us not forget how much Success at Arms contributes

tributes to the *Welfare of Religion*, the due and regular Worship of God. Even a false Religion gets much ground, and is usher'd into the World with Pomp and Solemnity, when they who promote it, are remarkably victorious. A pregnant Instance whereof we have in the *Mahometans*. How have they put out the Light of the Gospel, and introduced Darkness worse than *Egyptian*, by removing the *Candlesticks* of the Eastern Churches! How have they exchange'd the useful, as well as sublime Scheme of Christianity, for the impure, vicious, and absurd *Alcoran*! Was it not the conquering Sword of *Mahomet* and his Accomplices, together with the Iniquities of those tottering Christians, that planted the Imposture, made it thrive and grow up to that prodigious bulk?

Now, what was thus conducive to the Propagation of a *false Religion*, may not be ineffectual to preserve a *true One*. This was obvious in a peculiar manner, under the *Jewish Dispensation*, when the Worship of *Jacob's God* had no other Guard, but the Victories of the Worshippers over adjacent Kingdoms. And 'tis evident enough from their own Historian, That after the *Romans* had brought them into Subjection, they dwindled into Contempt; their High-Priests, contrary to the Divine Establishment, were annual and precarious; their Tribes and Families in some measure confounded; their Law corrupted, and their Church divided by different Opinions.

The same Truth may as evidently be inferr'd from the Circumstances of Men under the Gospel Dispensation. When Christians were low, subject to cruel, disaffected Emperors, their Zeal for the Decency of Divine Worship, was forcibly eclipsed; Being not allowed to erect and adorn Temples for God's Service, they were

A Sermon Preach'd at Banbury,

Euseb. de vita
Constantini.

fain to make use of obscure Cottages, Dens and Caves of the Earth to avoid Suspicion. Thus having not the Reins of Authority in their Hands, Christianity lay bleeding, was most inhumanly trampled upon by Heathens in the Saddle. But as soon as *Constantine* had embraced the Faith, what Honours were conferr'd on Christian Professors! How many devoted Souls rescued from the Jaws of Martyrdom! What compassionate *Edicts* sign'd for their Security! What magnificent Churches built and dedicated! And how much did he preserve the Purity of the Gospel, and discountenance the *Arian* and other Heresies, by convening and appearing himself in Person in the *Nicene Council*; by suppressing the Conventicles of Hereticks, and establishing a *Form of sound Doctrine*, wherein they might unite! The Face of Christianity, which before was all over sullied with Blood and Tears, was immediately chang'd into Chearfulness and Beauty; and the Cross, that was to *Jews* a *Stumbling-block*, and to *Gentiles* *Foolishness*, became the *salutary Standard*, the *Amulet* of *Demons*, the Protection of Christians, and the Terror and Destruction of Infidelity.

From what has been said, we may come to understand the great Mercy in the Text vouchsafed the *Jews*, express'd by the *avenging* of *Israel*. For *Israel* there signifies the whole *Jewish* Polity, Ecclesiastical and Civil, which by the Tyranny of *Jabin* King of *Canaan*, had been for several Years successively impaired and oppress'd: So that 'tis not to be imagin'd, that in a state of such Thralldom, they could have a true Enjoyment of their Rights and Privileges. Consequently, when by the Success of *Deborah*, and *Barak* her Adherent, they were released from Bondage, they were mercifully instated in their lost Prerogatives: Enjoy'd Peace, Plenty, Grandeur, Liberty,

Liberty, Property, and the free Use and Exercise of their Religion. Which as they justly accounted considerable Blessings ; so were they not at all backward in being *thankful* for them. And this brings me to the next thing to be insisted on ; having proposed to shew,

Secondly, How reasonable it is that such Publick Mercies, should be readily attended with Publick Praise ; or a Day of solemn Thanksgiving: Which I shall endeavour to evince from the following Considerations.

1st, From the justifiable *Examples* of good and great Men. What an emphatical Song of Praise was composed by *Moses*, when the *Israelites* had gotten the Victory over the *Egyptians* ! How devoutly did *David* on all due occasions offer the Sacrifice of Praise and Thanksgiving ! As his Conquests were numerous and often repeated, so were his triumphant Psalms too in Honour of his Deliverer. When the *Jewish* Temple was raised out of its Rubbish, and the gracious Commission of *Artaxerxes* to *Ezra*, opened and read, the zealous Patriot demonstrated his Gratitude in a pious Eulogie. And as soon as ever the *Israelites* were favour'd with the desirable Benefit of having the Law read to them, *He* blessed the Lord, the great God ; and all the People answered, *Amen, Amen, with lifting up their Hands ; and they bowed their Heads, and worshipped the Lord with their Faces to the Ground.* And as a farther Testimony of their unfeigned Joy, they kept with abundance of Ceremony, The *Feast of Tabernacles*, which never had been practised since the days of *Joshua*. From whence appears the Obligation of returning Publick Thanks for National Mercies of what kind soever.

But

But besides these, and several other Examples in favour of this Point, that might be produced, we have in Scripture express *Commands* recommending and enforcing it. The Book of *Psalms* is full of Exhortations and Precepts of this nature. And the Apostle in his first Epistle to Timothy, exhorts, that not only *Supplications, Prayers, and Intercessions*, but also *giving of Thanks be made for all Men*, (particularly) *for Kings, and all that are in Authority*: It being (as he immediately adds) a thing both good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour. Now Timothy, whom he gives this charge to, was sent by him in the Quality of a Bishop, to the Metropolitcal See of *Ephesus*, where were under his Care several Presbyters, Deacons, and other Christians. Nor is it to be doubted, but 'twas the intention of St. Paul, that on all fit occasions, he should give orders for their compliance with this Direction; That he should oblige all Persons within his own Jurisdiction, to Publick Thanks, when ever the Church of Christ should obtain any signal Blessing. And since his Epistle was to be received into the sacred Canon, 'tis no less evident, that the Apostle design'd it for a standing Rule to all Christian Churches.

Again, The very Nature of National Success, sufficiently infers the Reasonableness, as well as Duty of Publick Thanksgiving. That it is, as it were, a complication of most other Benefits, I have already said: And can any be so stupid and injudicious, as to think, that a whole Train of Mercies do not deserve Thanks? Is it no Advantage to serve and worship God in a way we apprehend most agreeable to his Will, without fear or obstruction? Is it no Privilege to enjoy Peace, Plenty, Liberty, and Property, the natural effects of Victory over Enemies? Now if all these be Blessings of vast Consequence to any People, 'tis but Equity that the Author
of

1. Tim. 2. 1, 2, 3.

* Vid. Hieron.
de Script. Ec-
clesiast. c.
Græc. So-
phron. Cata-
log. sumpt.

of them should receive the Thanks of those on whom they are conferr'd.

Men are Creatures endued with Sense; can relish the Sweets of Favours, as well as be disturbed and discomposed by Judgments; and so, naturally crave the one, and are averse to the other. And withal, they have Reason super-added to Sense, whereby they may be convinc'd of their Obligation to *Gratitude*, when Judgments are remov'd, and Favours bestowed on them. We cannot then neglect to be thankful for Mercies received, unless we check the very Dictates of Reason, and condemn our own selves from Principles of natural Religion.

Nay, common *Prudence* suggests thus much. All wise Men will be extremely cautious of losing a Friend, especially if they cannot live without him, and can procure no other so serviceable to 'em; And 'tis very obvious, That not to thank him for actual Favours, is the most certain way of losing his Munificence: For ^{Ἡ εὐχαιρία} were we never so tenderly affected towards indigent Ob- ^{ὅτι πρὸς τὸ} ^{πλεῖω δῶναι} ^{ἐγκλησις.}jects, their refusal to make Acknowledgments of the good we have done 'em, will go very near to stop the current of our future Kindness. Now God is peculiarly a Friend to Mankind; and, as to praise him for former Acts of Goodness, will engage him to continue his Friendship; so to enjoy 'em with an ungrateful Indifference, must provoke him to withdraw his Assistance for the future. *He will laugh at Men's Calamity, and* ^{Prov. I. 26, 28.} *mock when their Fear cometh;* if, as oft as he averts their Calamities, or removes their Fears, they be not truly thankful.

And if Praise be a Duty that ought to attend Mercies, 'tis but reasonable to conclude, that to the Nature of the Mercy, the Praise should be adapted. Consequently,

quently, where ever Publick Blessings are, *Publick Praises* should be also: Otherwise the Thanks being not so *extensive* as the Blessing, some Men must unavoidably be guilty of the Sin of Omission.

If then Prudence, Gratitude, Justice, religious Examples, or divine Commands can bind Men, it is not to be supposed, but that they are strictly *obliged* to requite God's Publick Mercies with Publick Acknowledgments.

But lest they should omit this incumbent Duty out of an arrogant Opinion of their own Strength; or pride themselves after Success, in their own Conduct; or else impute it to the Number or Dexterity of their Forces; I have resolved in the

Third Place, To let you know, how exceeding fit and necessary it is, That such Acts of Praise should be offered to the *Lord*, as the sole Author of all these Publick Mercies.

Ecclef. 9. 11. We are assured from the Divine Oracles, *That the Race is not to the Swift, nor the Battel to the Strong, but that the Battel is the Lord's. That the Lord of Hosts mustereth the Host of the Battel. That there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many, or by few; since if it be his Pleasure, One Man shall chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight. And, That the Lord maketh the Earth empty, and maketh it wast, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the Inhabitants thereof.* Hence is he characterized by the Royal Psalmist, *The Lord mighty in Battel.* And all the Heroes in the Old Testament have ascribed their Successes of this Nature, to the powerful Disposals of Divine Providence.

Isa. 13. 4.
1 Sam. 14. 6.
Deut. 32. 30.
Isa. 24. 1.
Psal. 24. 8.

'Tis evident from innumerable Instances in sacred History, that whenever God interposed for the Advantage of his People, they were miraculously victorious: whereas, if at any time, they had incurr'd his terrible Displeasure, they were as unaccountably sacrificed to the Fury of their Enemies. So visible did the Hand of God appear in all their Encounters, that one might have rightly guessed at their Spiritual, by dipping into the account of their Temporal Circumstances. A plain Demonstration, That the Fortunes of Kingdoms are at his Mercy; That *the Lord of Lords, and King of Kings, can put down one, and set up another*; as Officers at Will are continued, or displaced by their respective Princes. Rev. 17. 14.
Psal. 75. 7.

That God has an invisible Army continually attending his glorious *Throne*, ready to execute his just Decrees on the Inhabitants of his *Footstool*, is undeniably true, from our Saviour's Reprimand to his too forward Disciple. *Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve Legions of Angels*: Mat. 26. 53,
54. But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? Were it not the absolute and unshaken Determination of Heaven, that the blessed *Jesus* should be *crucified and slain*; not all the Malice of the *Jews*, nor the flourishing Estate of the *Roman Empire*, could possibly have injur'd him. If but one Angel commissioned by God, could destroy one hundred fourscore and five thousand *Assyrians*, who can doubt of the Divine Power in over-turning or preserving the Nations of the Earth, when he summons the whole *Artillery* of Heaven to effect his Pleasure? Acts 2. 23.
2 Kin. 19. 35.

Nay, If he speaks but the word, even inanimate Creatures are serviceable to this purpose. The very Elements and Planets are obedient to his beck; and in spite of all human Contrivances, either punish or protect Men according

Exod. 14. 21. cording to his Orders. The same Wind that made a safe Passage for the *Israelites* thro' the *Red Sea*, was the fatal Instrument of providing a Grave for the oppressive *Egyptians*. And those very *Stars* which were ordinarily created for the benefit of the World, are said to fight from Heaven in their Courses against *Sisera*. And truly, 'twould be very strange, if God should not have that influence over his own Creatures, as to make 'em subservient to the purposes of his Justice, Wisdom, and other Attributes.

He who refuses to ascribe National Success to the Power and Direction of God, is a down-right *Epicurean*; for Divine Providence is chiefly concern'd in all Publick Transactions. These are the very Hinges on which other lesser Matters are turn'd: And if God be excluded from having a hand in these, he cannot have any considerable share in the management of the Universe. And whoever is so addicted to *Scepticism* as to assert this, is next door to an *Atheist*; since to deny a Providence, is to take away one of the strongest and most sensible Arguments for the Being of a God.

Either then we must turn rank *Epicureans*, and consequently in some degree *Atheists*; or acknowledge the Providence of God to be peculiarly engag'd in the Affairs of Nations: That the event of War, which in respect of Men is precarious and doubtful, is determin'd by the Almighty, whose uncontrollable Disposals the Horse and the Rider must truckle to, and either conquer or submit, as he has appointed.

How free soever the Actions of Men, considered in a private capacity, may be, as they are incorporated into large Societies, they are questionless under the irresistible Conduct and Influence of Heaven. Nations shall be *Scourges* in the Sides of one another; or they shall sit down

down satisfied with their respective Properties, according to the nature of the Divine Purposes. When God would try the Gratitude and Sincerity of *Israel*, he severely chastiz'd 'em with Neighbouring Princes : Whereas, if he had a mind to give that People rest, the Malice and Ambition of their Enemies were to a Miracle restrain'd. Tho' they were seated among such Nations, as made it their whole business to disturb and ruin 'em, yet could they leave their Borders naked no less than three times every Year, when all their Men went to worship at *Jerusalem*, without the misery of an Invasion : And why was that, but because God had expressly assured 'em, That *no Man* should so much as *desire* Exod. 34. 23 *their Land, when they shall go up to appear before the Lord* ^{24.} *their God thrice in the Year.* Which plainly demonstrates, that the Providence of God is peculiarly concern'd in the Security or Desolation of Countries and Nations.

And indeed, this is the general Persuasion of all People, among whom, the Principles of right Reason are in any degree indulg'd ; which is evident from the Application they make in all imminent Dangers, to a supreme Being. Even the wicked *Nineveh*, whose Inhabitants were *Heathen*, had a speedy recourse to Methods of Humiliation, when the Prophet foretold God's intention to destroy 'em. They had as much reason to confide in their own strength as any People whatsoever, having *more than Sixscore thousand Persons* in the City, Jonah 3. 5, 6, 7, 8. whereof a very formidable Army might have been raised ; they need not have been afraid of any Attacks, had they not been conscious to themselves that they had made God their Enemy. The consideration of which, as it melted them into a Penitential State, so may it effectually convince us, That it has been the Opinion Chap. 4. 11.

even of barbarous Nations, to acknowledge the Providence of Almighty God in the Calamity or Protection of States and Kingdoms.

He then that considers the Characters given the Lord in Scripture, the main Substance and Tendency of all solemn Eulogies and Acknowledgments of the Victorious, the remarkable Exploits of God in former Ages, the nature of Divine Providence, and the general Persuasion of almost all People, cannot but assert, that Victory is a Mercy depending upon the wise Distributions of Heaven.

Now, If the sole Author of these Publick Blessings be the *Lord*, how highly reasonable and necessary is it, that *He* should have the Honour and Glory of 'em! And since we of this Nation are so unworthily happy, as to be the signal Objects of God's Care and Protection, we are inviolably bound, not only to contemplate the Favour, but to demean our selves acceptably towards our most gracious Benefactor. Which introduces me to the

Last Thing to be considered, (*viz.*) To apply the whole to our present Circumstances.

To which purpose, I shall, *First*, Lay before you, what Publick Mercies we of this Nation have been lately bless'd with: And then shew you,

Secondly, What Practical Improvements of 'em may be expected from us.

As to the *First*, 'Tis well known, we have been of late the very Favourites of Heaven: Providence has smil'd on most of our Enterprizes, cherishing us
with

with Prosperity ; whilst our Enemies were frown'd upon, and gall'd with Disappointments. All our Allies are every where Fortunate, and add to the Stream of our flowing Happiness. We can turn our selves to no corner of the World, but the pleasing Prospect of our own Victories is presented to us. The rich Soil of *Italy* and *Flanders*, afford us a plentiful crop of Success ; and even the most Barren part of *Spain*, has enrich'd and strengthen'd us. Prizes, like *Fishes*, are taken in our *Nets* ; and the *Money* and rich Cargo which we find in their *Months*, enable us to pay our *Custom* or *Tribute*. So remarkably indulgent is Providence to us, that we have a great part of our Provision from the very Labours of the Enemies, who are sent unto the uttermost Parts of the Earth for our Welfare and Subsistence. They go to the *Indies* to fetch us Riches, and heap up Ammunition and Treasure in Garrisons and fenced Cities, and then surrender 'em for our Use and Enjoyment.

What a refreshing Contemplation must it be, to think, how the *Grand Incendiary of Europe*, contrary to his ambitious Inclination, is forced to part with his unjust Possessions ! How may it satisfy us, to see him so seasonably deprived of the *Sinews of War*, and constrain'd to halt, unable to pursue mischievous Intrigues with his wonted Expedition ! When a black Cloud which carries Thunder in it, is all on a sudden blown off and dispersed, the succeeding *Serenity* cannot but be welcome. The Destruction threaten'd us some time ago, by that uneasie Monarch, now heightens our Comforts, giving us the additional Satisfaction of reflecting upon our Deliverance : And we may apply to him the Insultation of the Prophet over the King of *Babylon*, *Thy Pomp is* Isa. 14. 11, *brought down to the Grave, and the Noise of thy Viols :* 12.
How

How art thou fallen, from Heaven, O Lucifer, Son of the Morning? How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the Nations?

Nor are the Mercies less considerable, which are conferr'd on us at home. The Throne is fill'd with a becoming mixture of Meekness and Majesty; the Court with Integrity and Country-Principles; and the Senate with Loyalty, and Tenderness for the Church: All consult in their respective Stations, the Safety of the Nation, and the good of Religion, the two *trusty* Pillars, as well of our future as present Happiness.

Our most endearing Sovereign has committed the care of all Publick Affairs to Men of the best Character; Men that have sufficiently signified to the World by their Conduct and Bravery, how malicious and unjust their former Defamations were; Men that have been instrumental in effecting in a few Months, what in the compass of several Years, was far from being accomplish'd by other Hands: An invincible Argument, that they had no thirst after *French* Money, unless they could come at it as honourably as *Ormond* has done; *Ormond*, the Glory of the Gown and Sword; the Emulation of the present, the incredible Example of future Ages.

To these very valuable Blessings, we are oblig'd to add the joyful Recovery of his *Royal Highness*, and the safe and welcom arrival of our General and Commanders.

If then the Affairs of the Nation at Home and Abroad, be in the most desirable posture, it may with as much truth as comfort be asserted, That the Mercies we of this Nation have been lately blessed with, are great and stupendious. And if so, it may be very proper, in a few Particulars, to acquaint you,

What Practical Improvements they may require of us; the next (and only) thing to be insisted on.

First

First then, We must always acknowledge the Fountain, from whence Blessings of this nature are derived to us. The Honour of our Victories ought to be ascribed to the Lord of Hosts; and 'tis our Saviour's express command, That we should *render unto God the things that are God's.* What the sad consequence of *Senacharib's* arrogant Message to *Hezekiah*, was, has been already intimated. The destroying Angel in the space of one night, ruin'd his whole Army, tho' perhaps, one of the greatest that the Vanity of Man did ever muster up. But his Enemy *Hezekiah*, who humbly attributed all Success to Providence, found literally true what the *Psalmist* had asserted, That *the Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.* Luke 20. 25. Psal. 34. 7.

Again, Tho' we have been Victorious, we must by no means be proud of it, which indeed is the consequence of the other: For if God be the Author of these Publick Mercies, we have no reason to be lifted up when we enjoy 'em. Every one then should on this Occasion, argue thus with himself, *What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou receivedst the Victory from God, why wouldst thou glory, as if thou didst not receive it?* This Antidote will expel from our Hearts the Poison of Pride, and bring 'em to such a due Temper of Humility, as may engage Heaven to delight to do us good.

And when we are convinc'd, that 'tis the *Lord's* doing, there must appear in us all the proper Symptoms of Gratitude and Thankfulness. To be thankful to Benefactors, is what they may reasonably demand of us; and the Publick Mercies God has lately vouchsafed us, may well move us to discharge such an Obligation.

In order whereunto, we must not think it sufficient to offer the cheap Tribute of Speech: Tho' this on many accounts,

Isa. 29. 13,
14.

accounts, be highly necessary, yet other Performances are expected from us. Our Lives and Actions must be strictly guided by his Holy Will, to the end, our Sacrifice of Praise might be acceptable to him. How much God despises the Praises of Men, when they are not accompanied with Uprightness and Vertue, is evident from what he told the *Jews*; *Forasmuch as this People draw near me with their Mouth, and with their Lips do honour me, but have removed their Heart far from me: Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous Work amongst this People: The Wisdom of their Wise Men shall perish, and the Understanding of their Prudent Men shall be hid.* The Blessings we are now Partakers of, should move us all in our several Stations, to serve God with greater steddiness and ardency; otherwise, they will prove a means of pulling down upon us the Divine Judgments.

And, by the way, it must be observ'd, That as solemn Thanksgivings ought to follow real Success; so to use 'em on Politick Accounts, after real Miscarriages, is sinful and provoking. 'Tis a Mock-worship, a mere Solecism, not at all suited to Mens Circumstances and Conditions. In short, 'Tis jesting with Edge-tools in the worst sense, which must needs be dangerous. And indeed, the *Te Deum* lately sung at *Paris*, for the pretended Victory of the *French* at *Luzara*, and their sad Fate at *Vigo* some small time after, are notorious instances of the Sin and Punishment of so hypocritical a Proceeding. Not to mention what in the judgment of most Men, was practised much of the same nature by one of our own Princes, with the like due Success. --- But to return:

When we consider this our Advantage, and our Enemies Defeat, we should not so censure them as to overlook

look our own repeated Provocations. 'Tis the Imperfection of Mankind, to reflect on the Unfortunate as sinful and unworthy, and to account the Prosperous a deserving People. And at this juncture, we must be very careful that we do not split upon this Rock: But for the prevention thereof, our Blessed Redeemer has himself decided the Point. For when some told him of the *Galileans, whose Blood Pilate had mingled with their Sacrifices*; his Answer was, *Suppose ye that these Galileans were Sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things, I tell you nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* Luke 13. 1, 2, 3.

That we are blest with a Religion more Orthodox and Primitive than our Enemies, is very obvious; that our Cause is much juster than theirs, is no less certain: But still if we walk as crooked as they, when we have the Advantage of a straighter Rule, we shall be the more inexcusable, and unless we reform, obnoxious to the greater Vengeance. The Christian Religion is much more valuable than *Mahometanism*, and yet, when the Professors thereof were vicious and irregular, 'twas the purpose of Heaven, that the former should yield, and the latter vanquish. It happens, as well in this, as in cases of another nature, that a good cause may fare the worse for being in bad Hands: So that we must not provoke the Lord by our Iniquities, if we expect to have him propitious to us.

But farther, we are in a peculiar manner to respect those Persons, to whose Counsel and Conduct, under Almighty God, we owe our Successes. The Instruments of signal Mercies should, in a subordinate degree, be treated with Honour. Enjoying those Favours and Triumphs under the present Government, we must think our selves the more oblig'd to stand by and support it. To which

D. end.

end we must be unanimous and friendly to each other, unite in the common Interest, not pretending Conscience for the Sin of Division, which is plainly forbidden in the Rule of Conscience. For *if God so loved us*, as to shower down upon us his abundant Mercies, how ought we to answer the design of 'em, by *loving one another*!

Our very Situation is a peculiar Blessing; whilst most other Countries are the Seats of War, exposed to the Ravages of invading Adversaries; we in this Island are not so subject to foreign Incurfions. *The Waters are a Wall to us on our right hand and on our left*, as they sometime were to God's own People; and unless we quarrel among our selves, we need not much fear the Envy of other Nations.

Our Successes this Campagne may likewise represent unto us the Folly of Ambition and Covetousness. When Men are not contented with their own Districts, it is usual with God, to take from them what is actually in their Possession. Thus our greedy Adversary gaping after larger Morfels of Wealth and Treasures, has been forced to surrender up a great many Garifons; and has lost several considerable Ships, with rich and very useful Lading and Provision. These things should render us satisfied with our allotted Rights, and never covet nor desire what belongs to other Men, lest the Mischief we would do them, should, by a wise turn of Providence, happen to our selves.

Once more, Our late good Successes might induce us to trust entirely in God, resigning our selves up to the Conduct of his Will. He brings matters about beyond, nay, quite contrary to expectation. When all our Hopes are dashed, and we have no better Prospects than those of Disappointments, even then can he transport us with surprising Advantages. Witness the great Difficulties that have

have been surmounted in *Italy* with an handful of Men. Witness the Successes in other Places with unequal Numbers. And above all, witness the most remarkable Issue of the late *Descent*: Whilst we had an Eye upon *Cadiz*, and missing that, thought all measures of defeating the Enemy utterly broken, Providence led us to a much richer Booty. This might dispose us for a pliable Submission under all Disappointments; and keep us from murmuring when we are not successful in our own way, or according to the Platform of our own Resolutions.

To sum up all. If we would make due Improvements of the Mercies vouchsafed us, we must acknowledge God to be the Fountain from whence they spring; we must not be proud or lifted up with the Conceit of 'em: We must discover all possible Gratitude and Thankfulness for 'em; and demonstrate that Gratitude by the genuine Symptoms of a virtuous and holy Life. We must not depend altogether upon the Merits of our Cause, or the Purity of our Principles; but add to both these true Christian Practice. We must not censure our Enemies, because of their Misfortunes, or think the better of our selves, on the account of our Successes; but impute the whole Management to the Power, and Wisdom, and Goodness of God. We must, in a subordinate degree, treat even the Instruments of our Deliverances with Honour and Respect. We must especially signalize our Loyalty for the present Government, under which we have been Partakers of such considerable Benefits. We must *live in Peace* with one another, that *the God of Love and Peace may be with us*. We must hate Ambition and Covetousness, and take off our Affections from Things on Earth, which we find by our own Observation,

tion, to be so fleeting and transitory. And in a word, we must not prescribe to Divine Providence, but refer the Conduct of Publick Affairs to the Rector of the Universe; and never murmur under any Dispensation he shall please to allot us.

Psal. 149. 6,
7, 8, 9.

These Particulars, if we sincerely discharge, we may have reason to hope, That when *the high Praises of God are in our Mouths, a two-edged Sword will be in our Hands, To execute Vengeance upon our Enemies, and Punishments upon the People, that seek our Destruction: To bind their Kings with Chains, and their Nobles with Fetters of Iron: To execute upon 'em the Vengeance written:*
THIS HONOUR HAVE ALL HIS SAINTS.

Now to God, &c.

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FINIS.

